

*By 1st Lt. Miki Krejkarek
8th Fighter Wing Public Affairs*

Donning woven knit green shirts and carrying cans of mosquito repellant, the 35th and 80th Fighter Squadron crew chiefs are combating the mosquito population in the hardened aircraft shelters.

According to Senior Airman Lizardo Santiago-Otero, 35th FS dedicated crew chief, mosquitoes are a problem in the HAS he works in.

“The mosquitoes come out right when it starts getting dark,” he said. “As soon as you stand still, they get you.”

With the HASes located near rice fields and the potential for pools of water to form in nearby grasses, the facilities are an attraction to the insects.

As a prevention method, both maintenance squadron personnel are issued hooded shirts that they soak in diethyl-m-toluamide repellent overnight. The shirt is worn over their uniforms to prevent the mosquitoes from contacting the skin.

“The shirts work really well,” said Senior Airman Daniel Hopkins, 80th FS assistant dedicated crew chief. “The mosquitoes get so bad though that even sprays don’t work, but you have to put up with them.”

Santiago-Otero and his assistant crew chief, Senior Airman Eric Meiers, have resorted to looking out for each other by taking the task of one person conducting maintenance on the jet and the other holding the flashlight while swatting mosquitoes.

Although the mission gets accomplished the mosquito problem delays the task at hand, said Maj. Brian Smith, 35th FS maintenance officer.

“The mosquitoes delay the maintenance because the crew chiefs have to read a book, hold flashlights, hold a wrench and swat mosquitoes at the same time,” he said. “It could be a

When darkness comes, so do the mosquitos



Photos by Airman 1st Class Brian Hill

Senior Airman Lizardo Santiago-Otero, 35th Fighter Squadron crew chief, checks an F-16 prior to take off while fighting off mosquitos.

wild pack of dogs out here, but the crew chiefs get the mission done.”

Upon closer inspection inside the HASes, what looks like a film of dust on the walls and floor are really hundreds of dead mosquitoes.

“It’s discouraging coming into the HASes because the mosquitoes are on the jets and on the ground,” said Santiago-Otero.

Smith described the jets as “covered with fur” due to the swarms that come



Wearing a shirt soaked in mosquito repellant, Santiago-Otero checks under the wheel well of an F-16.

in during the night.

The large mosquito population is due in part to rain, humidity, expanse of rice fields surrounding the base, open containers holding water, and carbon dioxide emitted from humans, said Technical Sgt. Bill King, 8th Civil Engineer Squadron pest management NCO-in-charge.

Mosquito treatment is not simple but the 8 CES takes measures to reduce the population by fogging the base three times a week between dusk and dawn and immersing briquets in still pools of water to stop larvae maturation.

“We can cover the entire base with pesticide but a mosquito can travel one

to 10 miles in a night—they can be across the base or a mile out,” said King.

Mosquitoes can breed in as little as a teaspoon of water and eggs can sit for days, months or years without rain and incubate when moist conditions permit.

The 8 CES is actively trapping and testing the population twice a week to determine the female mosquito count, which determines treatment. According to King, the mosquito season started in the first part of June and is not expected to end until the first week of October.

“If we still have a problem, we’re going to continue to treat the base area,” King said.



Spiders roam the inside of the Hardened Aircraft Shelters feeding on the thousands of mosquitos caught in their webs.